

Eastside Transportation Partnership (ETP)
April 13, 2012
Meeting Summary

ETP Members

Councilmember Kimberly Allen	Redmond (Chair)
Mayor Bernie Talmas	Woodinville (Vice-Chair)
Councilmember Andrew Rheaume	Bothell
Mayor Ava Frisinger	Issaquah
Councilmember Bob Hensel	Kenmore
Councilmember Dave Asher	Kirkland
Councilmember Amy Walen	Kirkland
Councilmember Kathy Lambert	King County
Chris Arkills	King County Executive (Alternate)
Councilmember Dave Asher	Kirkland
Councilmember John Stilin	Redmond
Councilmember Don Persson	Renton
Councilmember Don Gerend	Sammamish (Alternate)
Deputy Mayor John James	Sammamish
Councilmember Jane Brahm	Mercer Island
Councilmember Mike Cero	Mercer Island
Councilmember Steve Buri	Newcastle
Councilmember John Stilin	Redmond
Peter Camp	Snohomish County
Councilmember Susan Boundy-Sanders	Woodinville
Mayor George Martin	Clyde Hill (Small Cities)
Councilmember Doug Dicharry	Medina (Small Cities)
Mayor Dave Cooper	Yarrow Point (Small Cities)
Councilmember Amy Ockerlander	Duvall (SVGA)
Mayor Jim Berger	Carnation (SVGA)
Brian Doennebrink	Community Transit
Dick Paylor	Eastside Transportation Association
Charlie Howard	PSRC
Deputy Council President Fred Butler	Sound Transit
Charles Prestrud	WSDOT (Alternate)

I. Public Comment

No public comment.

II. Approval of March 16, 2012 Meeting Summary

The March 16, 2012 meeting summary was approved with no corrections.

III. SR 520 Construction and Tolling Update

John White, WSDOT SR 520 Floating Bridge & Landings Project Director, and Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, presented a SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program and Tolling update. Mr. White began by explaining that there are different elements to the SR 520 program, including: I-5 to Medina Bridge Replacement and HOV Project, Medina to SR 202, Lake Washington Congestion Management Project, and the Pontoon Construction Project. The total project cost is \$4.65 billion. The project currently has \$2.43 billion in funding that is paying for the floating bridge replacement (including pontoon construction in Grays Harbor); partial funding for environmental review, design, and right-of-way acquisition from I-5 to the western edge of the floating bridge, and paying for construction of the Eastside Transit and HOV project.

In April, the Eastside construction activities will include complete demolition of the existing bridge at Evergreen Point Road, continued construction of the retaining and rockery walls east of 92nd Avenue NE, and installation of the fish culvert under Bellevue Way. Later in 2012, WSDOT will shift traffic onto the new 84th Avenue NE and 92nd Avenue NE lid, demolish the existing overpasses, begin paving with 100,000 tons of warm mix asphalt, begin constructing noise walls, and install more fish culverts.

For the floating bridge, the pontoons are currently under construction in Aberdeen and Tacoma. Other precast concrete elements are also under construction in Kenmore. Construction efforts on Lake Washington began this April, and will be ramping up over the next few months. You will see many more barges and cranes being brought on site for construction.

Councilmember Stilin asked what will happen to the old bridge. Mr. White said the existing bridge will be deconstructed and removed with a focus on sustainably reusing the materials. WSDOT's contractor has been identifying interested parties for repurposing pontoons suitable for alternative uses such as docks or wave breaks.

For permitting this project, WSDOT worked to obtain all the permits for the entire project at the same time rather than applying for each permit before constructing individual phases. Currently, all the permits have been approved from relevant federal agencies, and tentatively approved by the cities of Seattle and Medina pending an appeals process. The permit appeals process for the west and east bridge approaches would normally have been subject to a temporary stay on construction until the issue is resolved, but the legislature approved House Bill 2814 which removed the stay for the SR 520 Bridge project. This allows construction to move forward, but WSDOT will have to address any of the findings of the appeals process at later time.

Looking at the remainder of 2012, WSDOT plans to sign a memorandum of understanding with the City of Seattle as part of the I-5 to Medina project to begin the second bascule bridge planning, neighborhood traffic management planning, and Seattle community design planning. Additionally, WSDOT will continue to seek funding for construction of the SR 520 segment from I-5 to the west edge of the floating bridge.

Deputy Mayor James asked what the incentive is for the contractor to complete the work on time since the State is already tolling the facility. Mr. White responded that the facility suffers from

continued and unpredictable maintenance. It is a public safety issue to replace the bridge as soon as possible. WSDOT is offering the contractor an incentive of \$2.4 million to complete work by December 2014, with the incentive decreasing each day after that.

Councilmember Asher asked if there has been clarification about the bike/pedestrian connection between the WSDOT SR 520 Bridge design and Bellevue bike/pedestrian facilities. Chair Allen said that ETP can work with Bellevue and WSDOT to better understand how this connection will be made.

Mr. Stone presented a tolling update on SR 520 tolling. The Lake Washington Congestion Management Program has \$154.5 million in federal grants to improve cross-lake travel. This has helped fund projects to: implement variable tolling on the SR 520 bridge, install electronic travel time signs on I-405, SR 520, and SR 522 to direct drivers to the best route across Lake Washington, create Smarter Highways on SR 520 and I-90 by providing drivers with variable speed limits and real-time driver information, work with King County and Sound Transit to add more than 130 daily bus trips across the SR 520 Bridge, and help establish vanpool and carpool programs by encouraging people to commute together. Regarding transit and vanpool service, King County and Sound Transit have increased bus service by 20 percent, helping lead to a 10 percent increase in ridership since tolling began, and increase in vanpools in the corridor. In addition, Park-and-Ride usage is similar to pre-tolling levels with most lots remaining full.

Tolling to the existing SR 520 Bridge began on December 29, 2011. It implements an 'open-road' toll that has no toll booths, allowing all vehicles to maintain highway speeds and improve traffic flow. Tolls are collected through two payment methods: a "Good To Go!" account that is either tied to a specific license plate (additional 25 cent fee) or to a pass affixed to your windshield, or by photo toll where unregistered vehicles will pay by license plate photo and will be mailed a bill. A "Short Term Account" can also be set up where visitors can register a temporary account online to pay by photo toll and receive a discount.

Tolling in the corridor has exceeded WSDOT expectations. The goal was to have 100,000 Good To Go! accounts on opening day, and WSDOT had 225,000 new accounts created between February 2011 and the end of February 2012. Additionally, WSDOT forecasted that 72 percent of the tolls would be paid via Good To Go! accounts, and through February WSDOT has seen 79 percent of all toll trips made using a Good To Go! account, exceeding 80 percent during weekday peak periods.

Weekday toll rates for the SR 520 Bridge currently range from a low of \$1.50 during the evening period with a Good To Go! account, up to \$5 during the peak period without an account. The average of all SR 520 toll rates is slightly above \$2.50, which is very close to the original 1963 toll rate when adjusted for inflation. In comparing toll rates to other regions, San Francisco charges \$6 during the peak period and \$4 during the off-peak, and Vancouver B.C. does not have peak rates, but charges \$2.90 for users with a pass, \$3.45 to pay by plate, and \$4.10 without a pass or account.

Since tolling began at the end of 2011, WSDOT has been monitoring the changes in traffic flow to understand how travelers have shifted their travel patterns. On SR 520, toll traffic is generally at or above projected levels in the first three months of operations. On I-90, traffic has increased 5 to 10 percent. On SR 522, traffic has increased 5 percent and travel times have increased slightly during the morning commute. On I-5, traffic is within 2 percent of pre-tolling levels, but travel times between Seattle and Northgate are two to three minutes slower in both directions. On I-405, traffic is within 2 percent of pre-tolling levels, but travel times through Bellevue are two to three minutes slower in both directions. Data on SR 520 shows that traffic during the peak periods is reaching expected volumes, but during midday drivers choose to use other locations. This indicates that changes in the pricing structure may be needed to increase midday usage.

In total, the actual use of the tolled bridge is exceeding the forecasted use. Revenue from tolls is coming in near the predicted amount. Looking forward, the toll rates will increase annually by 2.5 percent (approximately 10 cents) starting July 1, 2012 through 2015. Then on July 1, 2016, the rates will increase by approximately 15 percent (approximately 50 cents) or by whatever amount the Transportation Commission deems necessary to meet the remaining funding requirements. In addition, a nighttime toll of \$1.25 will be added once construction is complete in 2016.

Mayor Martin asked if WSDOT has reached an agreement with Canada regarding license plate tolls of Canadian SR 520 Bridge users. Mr. Stone said that WSDOT staff is meeting with officials next week to discuss this issue.

Mr. Paylor asked what percent of the toll revenue is used for administration, and with the toll reducing the number of vehicles on SR 520, is it increasing congestion throughout the region? Mr. Stone said that the percent of the toll used for administration is largely driven by economies of scale. In Florida, one of the highest use facilities has an administration cost of 7 percent. On the Tacoma Narrows Bridge the cost has been 18 percent. WSDOT has a goal of getting down to 10 percent.

Deputy Mayor James said that since I-90 is at capacity, two percent increase in traffic makes a substantial difference, therefore justifying tolling I-90 or lowering the SR 520 toll rate. Mr. Stone said that WSDOT has looked at the elasticity curves of what the right toll amount is to charge users while maintaining traffic volume. This is all being revised as we get real data. I-90 is also under review to potentially be tolled which will change the system flow again.

IV. Report from the Rules Subcommittee

Councilmember Gerend gave a report on the Rules Subcommittee for Subcommittee Chair Schaer who was unable to attend. Councilmember Gerend said the subcommittee is drafting a proposal that they plan to share with ETP soon.

V. Reports

Charlie Howard, Transportation Manager with the PSRC, said that the PSRC Transportation Policy Board (TPB) had a meeting on April 12. The major item the TPB took up was an amendment to Transportation 2040 which was adopted. A significant part the amendment, requested by WSDOT, proposes changes that incorporate the new strategies proposed on Interstate 5 in the vicinity of Joint Base Lewis-McChord. PSRC staff has reviewed the proposed changes and determined that they are consistent with adopted policy and regional procedures and had no significant impact on the transportation plan's financial strategy. The board voted to recommend approval of the amendment to the Executive Board and General Assembly.

Chair Allen also mentioned that ETP should look to find a new room for the next ETP meeting as the one used at Mercer Island was too small. Wes Edwards, Transportation Planner with King County DOT, asked if Mercer Island was a suitable location if a different meeting room could be identified. Some members expressed a preference to find a new location. ETP staff will continue to look for a new ETP meeting location.

VI. New Business

There was no new business. Chair Allen closed the meeting.

Other Attendees:

Monica Whitman, SCA	Terry Marpert, Redmond
Will Knedlik, ETA	Wes Edwards, KCDOT
Paul Carlson, MKCC	Jack Whisner, KC Metro
Doug Levy	John White, WSDOT
Dave Godfrey, Kirkland	Salima Hamlin, HNTB
Craig Stone, WSDOT	Claudia Hirschey